



THE SELF, MOTIVATION & VIRTUE PROJECT

Interdisciplinary. Innovative
MORAL SELF RESEARCH

FUNDED BY THE
TEMPLETON RELIGION TRUST

DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

Dear friends of the SMV Project,

We are pleased to announce, through our first newsletter, that the “Self, Motivation, and Virtue” project is up and running and in full swing! In response to our call for proposals, we received 170 letters of intent from 27 countries. Thirty of those fascinating projects have been selected for presentation at our first major event, the **Interdisciplinary Moral Forum (IMF)**, which will take place this week at Marquette University.

Please check out the abstracts for the IMF presentations below and on **our website**. You will notice quite a range and diversity of interests in the projects to be presented. From neuroscience to theater, from war to peace, from Islam to Confucianism to Java, Buddhism, and South India, we are looking forward to a lively and robust discussion and expect an expansion of everyone’s imagination regarding the self, motivation, and virtue. Our **core project team** of experts will be selecting twenty of these projects for the next round of evaluation.

in this issue

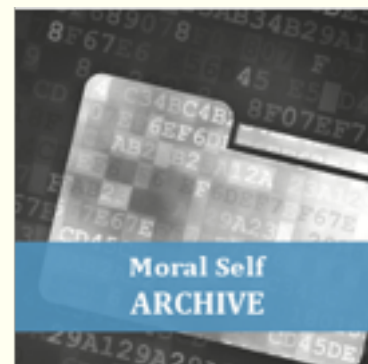
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Our **Moral Self Archive** is scheduled to open in late March. It will host conference materials, videos, publications, working papers, data sets,

We wanted to point out that we will also be forming an interdisciplinary network of researchers called the Moral Self Network. Work from this network will be digitally archived at the Raynor Memorial Library, in our **Moral Self Archive** and will serve as an ongoing resource for those interested in the important topics that bring us together.

Please stay in touch with us as the Self, Motivation and Virtue initiative moves forward. We invite you to forward this newsletter to others you think will be interested in our work, which is made possible by a generous grant from the Templeton Religion Trust.

Sincerely,

Darcia Narvaez and Nancy E. Snow

SMV Project Co-Directors

and other research. We are currently accepting contributions. Send contributions to Max Parish at max.parish@marquette.edu.

quick links

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[meet our team](#)

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WHAT IS THE SMV PROJECT?

The SMV Project is a 36-month research initiative that supports cutting-edge, interdisciplinary research on the moral self. Our initiative is unique in two important respects.

- **Deep Integration** Research into character and virtue is often conducted by scholars from within a single disciplinary perspective. This disciplinary isolationism impedes knowledge of virtue and the self. We are pioneering a new approach we call *deep integration*, which requires that each research team include at least one humanist and one social scientist who are equally invested in the project from inception to completion. We think this approach will yield fruitful results.
- **Methodological Innovation** We think traditional psychological measures do not get at the heart of virtue. This is because behavioral measures by themselves do not yield information about subjects' *motivations* for action. We support research that pushes beyond traditional self-report methods in order to achieve new insight on virtuous motivation and how it develops.

NEW WEBSITE

We recently launched our permanent website, designed and created by **Zizzo Group**, a Milwaukee-based, professional marketing firm. We are grateful to Anne Zizzo, CEO of Zizzo Group and Marquette University Trustee, for supporting the SMV Project by designing and creating our website at a generous discount. We are delighted with the result, and hope you find the website informative and inviting.

Please check **our website** for updates in the coming months as the SMV Project progresses. We will be adding videos, including videos from the IMF, interactive forums, and relevant links and information.



INTERDISCIPLINARY MORAL FORUM



The **Interdisciplinary Moral Forum (IMF)** will bring together over 60 moral self researchers from 12 countries and 44 institutions. It will be held at **Marquette University** in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, this week, from Thursday through Saturday evening (March 12-14).

This by-invitation-only event has two chief purposes. First, it will provide an opportunity for our **Core Project Team** to evaluate the semi-finalist research proposals. On the basis of these evaluations, the Core Project Team, in collaboration with the SMV Project directors, will select 20 teams to invite to the **Full Proposal stage** of the evaluation process.

Second, the IMF will launch the Moral Self Network, an interdisciplinary and international network of scholars focused on the topics of the self, motivation and virtue. This network will function as a support to our funded research teams and a resource for other moral self researchers. We are supporting the Moral Self Network with a restricted-access email listserv, a private and informal venue in which researchers can

discuss SMV funded projects, other research, float new ideas, discuss research challenges and successes, work in progress, new publications, and more.

SEMI-FINALIST PROPOSALS

These thirty semi-finalist research proposals were selected for their importance, creativity, methodological innovation, and thoroughly integrated interdisciplinary approach. **Click the abstract titles to read more about each project.**

Development of the moral self: A comparison of Protestant rural dwellers in the Netherlands and Hindu rural dwellers in South India

Our study investigates virtues within a community by comparing elderly people in an orthodox protestant rural setting in the Netherlands with those in a traditional hindu rural setting in South India.

Development of Human Values and Virtues: An Empirical Investigation of a Philosophical Debate

Prosocial values and prosocial behavior are important moral concepts, but which comes first in development? We will develop this question with philosophical tools, and investigate it with a developmental psychology study.

Encircling the Confucian Self

The interdependent, culturally embedded Chinese self differs from Western and non-Western selves in countless ways as revealed by developmentalists, neuropsychologists, cultural historians and philosophers. We are called into this work first because this multidisciplinary area of research lacks a unified explanation for these facts.

Eudaimonic Growth: How Virtues and Motives Shape the Narrative Self and Its Development within a Social Ecology

This transdisciplinary study will examine how the narration of self, motivation, and eudaimonic virtues like wisdom and compassion develop within a social ecology of family master narratives and social institutions...

Existential Feelings in Virtue: A Philosophical-Psychological Investigation

This project explores the role of existential feelings – “background” affective states, such as feeling connected to or disconnected from the world and others – in promoting or inhibiting virtue across the lifespan.

Giving from the Heart: The Role of the Heart and the Brain in Virtuous Motivation and Integrity

Although it might seem that talk of “gut decisions” and being “big-hearted” is metaphorical, from the point of view of embodied cognition, such language is quite literal. We will use multiple methodologies to examine the relationship between explicit, implicit, and embodied measures of virtue.

Humility in Loving Encounter: Ontological and Cognitive–Motivational Models of the Moral Self in Stable Communities of Care, Forgiveness, and Reconciliation

Each of us can think of exemplary people whose lives were testimony to a loving humility in the encounter with and service for others. Our work seeks to understand the moral character of self that supports this kind of humility in loving encounter.

Investigating Implicit Aspects of Virtue: Understanding Humility Among Moral Exemplars

Our research project will investigate the virtue of humility among real world humanitarian exemplars, such as holocaust rescuers and hospice workers. We will use computer technology to analyze interviews with these types of populations to understand the different factors involved in the virtue of humility.

Investigating the Moral self

Emerging research suggests a crucial link between the self and morality. Although this work indicates an association between morality and the self, it reveals little about how this association works, and thus the goal of our project is to provide answers to key questions related to responsibility, motivation, recognition, and the psychological implementation of the moral self.

"Jihad," what's happening with this virtue?

What are the psychosocial factors that contribute to the implementation of a virtue? How can virtuous motivations be very different from each other? This project pursues these questions with three studies. The first aims to explain the variety of the virtue of Jihad that can be derived from Islamic scripture, the second is qualitative-comparative, and the third is experimental design.

Mindfulness, Creativity, Embodiment and the Cultivation of Self: An East Asian Perspective

Drawing from East Asian Buddhist practices, our research project explores the role of embodiment and mindfulness practices in the cultivation of self while engaging in a creative activity in a collaborative project between a psychologist, a filmmaker, and a musician.

Motivating the Self to Virtue in Western and non-Western Countries: Does nation or faith matter more?

Our international interdisciplinary team plans to interview people from 4 faith conditions (Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, and agnostic), in 3 countries (Canada, Iran, and Korea) about their understanding of virtue and how they might attempt to achieve virtue in their own lives.

Motivating Virtuous Selves: The Impact of Gender and Culture

This project explores how self-identification by gender or culture impacts motivation to virtuous behavior, as illustrated by real choices made in virtual scenarios. Participants make ethical decisions in choose-your-adventure virtual narratives and maintain weekly journals.

Personal Projects and the Development of Virtue: How Characteristic Adaptations Enact and Encourage Virtue

How does the development of virtue play out in the context of personal projects, such as those related to relationships, vocation, and self-improvement? In a sample of 200 undergraduates, this longitudinal study will investigate how characteristic adaptations develop over time...

Self and Desire as Seeds of Virtue: A Buddhist-inspired Multi-method Investigation

According to Buddhist philosophies, recognizing the self as impermanent, changing, and interdependent is at the root of virtue. Our primary research question asks: 1) to what extent do people experience self-transcending and self-cherishing desires in everyday life, and 2) to what extent do these different desires predict behaviors and body physiology that underlie virtue and well-being.

Self as a Minority: Perceptions and Presentations of Well-Being, Efficacy, Creativity and Empathy

The purpose of the study is to better understand how young adults in the U.S. who self-identify as minorities (broadly defined to include race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability/disability, nationality and country of origin) experience being efficacious, creative and

Self-Control: The Linking of Self, Motivation, and Virtue

What role does self-control play in the development and expression of virtue? We will refine and develop measures to track the function of self-control in people's daily virtue-relevant behavior, as well as the development of their self-narratives...

empathic within the majority culture that might categorize them as “other.”

Selfless Agents

This project will address the fundamental question in the background of the Self, Motivation and Virtue Project: How is the Self to be conceived? We challenge the premise of western philosophy that a diachronically unified self is the locus of moral progress.

Self-Transcendence, Virtue and Happiness: A Psychological Investigation of Buddhist Perspectives on the Self and Well-Being

The proposed project aims to study self-identification as a major impediment to virtue and happiness, and self-transcendence as a reliable path to higher personal well-being. We will study a family of virtues and character strengths that approximate self-transcendence in the Buddhist sense, such as humility, perspective, and a sense of interconnectedness with humanity.

Theatrical Intervention as a Pathway to Moral Virtue Development

Confucian ethics emphasizes the practice of social rituals (social and cognitive scripts) in moral virtue development. Developmental science finds that socioemotional intelligence and thus, virtue, are fostered through parent-child mutual responsiveness. Using theater, we combine the insights of ancient philosophy and developmental science.

The Gestation of Virtue: An Examination of How Experiences in the Womb may Build the Moral Self

Do experiences in the womb prepare a baby to later show early signs of virtuous behavior? Prior to this project, we administered many pen-and-pencil-style questionnaires to mothers of young infants. We found that, controlling for a variety of likely confounds, the mothers’ recalled levels of massaging of the fetus through pressure applied on the abdomen predicted a host of positive outcomes in the first three years of life.

The Motivation to Love

We undertake a qualitative study of spiritual

The Neuroscience of Habituated Motivation

Ethical cultivation as conceived by virtue ethics

violence in Roman Catholic and evangelical Protestant churches' relationships with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. Our project investigates how the self is harmed by the spiritual violence of sacramental shame and how people—situated differently in relation to this institutional religious harm—acquire the motivation to cultivate such virtues as compassion, hope, and Christian love that can serve as counterforces to this form of violence.

since Aristotle may fail because of deep features of human neurocognitive architecture. We simplify the moral maps of the world much more than what we would expect and want. But, sometimes, we are able to invest in learning subtle and sophisticated patterns. Our team aims at elucidating factors influencing this ambivalent attitude by applying neurocognitive models of skill acquisition to ethical learning.

The Soldier Returned Home: Trauma, Virtue, and the Narrative Self

Three decades of clinical research shows that evidence-based treatments reduce the psychiatric symptoms of PTSD. But can standard treatments also lead to positive development in character and identity? Based on clinical experience, we believe PTSD treatment will result in salutary change for the individual at the level of character and identity.

The Peaceful Self: An Interdisciplinary Window on Motivation of Virtue

In this project we will investigate the roles of social- and bio-narratives in the construction of peaceful selves. We define the peaceful self as an aspect of self associated with virtue embodied in action. We will study young children and adolescents, as well as exceptional adults...

The Transformation of the Self: Competing Moral Repertoires in Modern Java

Character and virtue are changing rapidly in Indonesia, home to the world's largest Muslim population. Our project aims to assess the impact of commercialization and modern Islamic religious education on the Javanese preference for communal harmony.

The Virtue of Self-Distancing

According to Adam Smith, developing a moral self requires psychological distance—the ability to adopt a perspective outside of oneself and then examine one's conduct from that point of view. Our project will rigorously test Smith's claim...

Understanding the Virtue-Relevant Self Through Courage

To what extent do differences in who we are predict differences in courage? We propose to develop a measure of the virtue-relevant self, which is composed of self-conception, social roles, virtue-relevant values, and personality traits.

Virtues as Properly Motivated, Self-integrated Traits

Our central aim is to deepen virtue research with intensive longitudinal measurement of virtuous activity, which includes behavior, motivation, self-congruence, and situational factors. We will assess participants' real-world activity...with respect to two pervasive virtues: fairness and kindness.

When the Virtuous Community and the Virtuous Individual Collide in the Creation of Virtuous Selves

The primary research question for our project is "How is the virtuous self fostered in environments where frameworks that develop large, competitive (individualistic) egos with small moral selves are pitted against frameworks that generate selves that see themselves as selves because of other selves that are for other selves?"

If you have any questions about the SMV Project, or would like to contribute a news item, article, or publication, please contact Max Parish at max.parish@marquette.edu.



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